6/25/80

John Ray Was On His Way To Hospital, He Tells Police

By Charles Bosworth Jr.
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

QUINCY, Ill — Quincy police say that John Larry Ray has told them that he went to Alton, where he was arrested Monday, to sign himself into the state mental hospital there because he is "mentally unbalanced."

Ray, the brother of James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, is under tight security at the Adams County Jail in Quincy, where he was transferred Tuesday from Madison County to face bank robbery charges.

Ray is expected to be questioned by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents, in part to determine whether there is any evidence linking him to the wounding of national Urban League director Vernon Jordan in Fort Wayne, Ind., last month.

The FBI said Ray is not a suspect in Jordan's shooting May 29, but it wants to know where he was when the attack occurred.

Ray, 47, was to be arraigned today on an Adams County charge of armed robbery in the May 30 robbery at the Farmers Bank of Liberty, 11 miles east of Quincy. Ray is being held in lieu of $200,000 bond.

Sheriff Robert Nall of Adams County said Tuesday that he was told in a telephone call from Anna Ray of Knoxville, Tenn., the wife of James Earl Ray, that nationally known lawyer Mark Lane, who has been an attorney for her husband, would defend John Ray.

Nall said Mrs. Ray alleged that John

See RAY, Page 7

■ FROM PAGE ONE

Ray had been framed in the bank robbery.

Nall, who said that providing for Ray's security would burden the Sheriff's Department staff, said he would use county patrol deputies as extra guards in the jail.

After Ray's capture, the bank that was robbed put up a sign in its lobby, Nall said. The sign reads: "Crime does not pay. Just ask the brothers, James and John Ray."

The bank was robbed of $15,000 by a man wearing a nylon stocking mask and carrying a pistol.

Nall said Ray told police that he has suffered recently from memory lapses, sometimes blacking out for two or three weeks. Nall said Ray told him that he had planned to check himself into the Alton State Mental Hospital. Nall quoted him as saying, "I'm mentally unbalanced."

Nall said: "I'm totally amazed at the guy. He's very cunning. You know, dumb like a fox. He's very jovial and very accommodating. He's never resistive of anything. He's not like the normal type of criminal we deal with every day."

Nall noted that the Ray family lived near Quincy in Newtown when James and John were children.

John Ray was arrested Monday in Alton by Sgt. Conrad "Pete" Baetz of the Madison County Sheriff's Department. Baetz was off duty Monday and returning from a shopping trip with his wife when he noticed a man who looked like Ray walking along Illinois Route 140 near the mental hospital.

Baetz had met Ray when Baetz was a staff investigator for the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations.

Baetz called for a uniformed deputy and then assisted him in the arrest. Ray was taken before Circuit Judge Victor Mosele in Edwardsville Tuesday and ordered returned to Quincy on the armed robbery charge.

When Mosele asked Ray whether he could post the $200,000 bond, Ray replied that it wouldn't matter because the federal government also had a hold order on him. The order was issued after Ray failed to report to a halfway house in St. Louis in February after being released from the federal prison at Marion, Ill. He served time in the prison for bank robbery.

Ray was flown to Quincy from Civic Memorial Airport at Bethalto Tuesday afternoon.

Wayne Davis, special agent in charge of the FBI in Indiana, said Ray will be questioned on his whereabouts when Jordan was shot. Davis would not say when Ray would be questioned, but other sources said it could be today.

Earlier Tuesday, FBI Director William H. Webster said the similarities between King's assassination and the attempt on Jordan's life had prompted the FBI's interest in questioning Ray, even though he is not considered a suspect and there is no evidence linking him to the shooting. Both civil rights leaders were shot with 30.06 rifles at motels.

Nall said he believes a .38-caliber revolver found in a shopping bag Ray was carrying when he was arrested was the one used in the bank robbery. Nall said he believes tests will match it to a slug removed from a tree in a pasture where the stolen car used in the robbery was found. Nall said he thinks the slug entered the tree when the robber test-fired his revolver.

Nall also said a sport cap matching the description of the one worn by the robber was found in Ray's bag, along with pieces of nylon stocking similar to the mask worn by the robber. Nall said none of the money was recovered.